

## What is claimed is:

[Claim 1] 1. A process for desilicating nonwood plant fibers comprising:  
(a) wet pre-pulping the nonwood plant fiber under controlled conditions of temperature, solids content, and pH;  
(b) removing both suspended solids and dissolved solids from the fibrous portion of the pre-pulped material by filtration or dewatering, or filtration and dewatering;  
(c) adding acid to the filtrate to force the precipitation of solubilized silicate; and  
(d) removing the silica and other solids from the filtrate, and reusing the filtrate in the pre-pulping step.

[Claim 2] 2. The process of claim 1 wherein the resulting nonwood plant fibers can be subsequently pulped chemically and/or mechanically, then bleached.

[Claim 3] 3. The process of claim 1 wherein the precipitated silica is used as a raw material for other applications.

[Claim 4] 4. The process of claim 1 wherein the fiber is wet pre-pulped at a pH of about 7 to about 11.

[Claim 5] 5. The process of claim 1 wherein the fiber is wet pre-pulped at a temperature of about 50°C to about 90°C.

[Claim 6] 6. The process of claim 1 wherein the fiber is wet-prepulsed to a solids content of about 0.5% solids to about 6.0% solids.

